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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001778

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SUBJECT: SANT'EGIDIO ANALYSIS OF LRA/GOU TALKS

REF: KHARTOUM 1675

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Classified By: P/E Eric Whitaker for reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Representatives of the Community of Sant'Egidio (CSE) assisting with the mediation of talks between the Lord's Resistance Army/Movement (LRA/LRM) and the Government of Uganda (GOU) have provided a detailed readout on where the talks now stand. After long discussions, the groups agreed on rules of procedure and established a sequential agenda with cessation of hostilities as the first item. The GSE also rated the performance of the various actors, including a competent and hard-working Riek Machar, a LRA leadership that knows negotiation may be their only option, an incompetent LRA negotiating team that cannot speak for the leadership, a patient, professional, and skeptical Ugandan delegation, and an angry and tired southern population. The CSE believes that the talks could yield a negotiated settlement, although this is by no means a foregone conclusion. End summary.

The Process

12. (C) Mario Giro and Dr. Stefano Carmenati met with CG on July 18 to discuss LRA/GOU mediation initiative. They provided background on CSE role in brokering contact with the LRA, including their earlier meetings with Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti at LRA camps. They said that after a rocky start, the parties had agreed to ground rules. Each side is represented by seven delegates permitted to speak. The president of each delegation normally speaks for his side, although the president could designate other speakers from among the seven at his discretion. Five other members of each delegation may observe, but not speak. Observers from religious and tribal groupings cannot attend the talks, but are available on the margins for discussions with interested parties. Riek Machar is the chief mediator, assisted by Telecommunications Minister Gier Chuan Aluong and Health Minister Theophilus Ochang Lotti, who comes from Eastern Equatoria.

13. (SBU) On July 17, both sides reportedly agreed to a five-point agenda covering the following issues. They have initiated discussion of the first point.

(1) Cessation of Hostilities: This is not a ceasefire per se, but rather an agreement in principle to halt all offensive military action.

(2) Political Issues: This agenda item includes participation of all Ugandan parties in national

institutions, including the military. In addition, socio-economic conditions in Northern Uganda and the plight of IDPs will be discussed.

(3) Reconciliation and Accountability: The most important point here is the unilateral amnesty offered by the GOU. The LRA side initially demanded that any amnesty be negotiated rather than offered unilaterally, but appear to have backed off that position.

(4) Formal Ceasefire: The LRA pressed for an immediate ceasefire, which the Ugandans refused on the grounds that international verification and separation forces are not available, making a formal ceasefire impracticable.

(5) Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation (DDR): The concluding point would determine the method and timing of DDR and the return of combatants to Uganda.

Parties and Performances

14. (C) The CSE described who are involved in the talks and rated their performance. The following individuals/groups have been the key actors:

(1) Riek Machar: Giro said that Machar had performed well to this point. He has been well prepared and patient and has dealt equitably with both sides. Carmenati complimented Machar's work ethic and said that the only major mistake Machar committed in the run-up to the talks was the filmed delivery of USD 20,000 to Kony. Giro said that he believed the money involved was from the Dutch, and not SPLM coffers. Clearly embarrassed by his misstep, Machar seemed unwilling to even admit the incident had occurred.

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(2) LRA leadership: Giro described his meetings in the bush with Kony and Otti and said that he was not convinced of the sincerity of either man. It was obvious, however, the LRA leadership realized that its military fortunes were waning and that a negotiated settlement might be the best way out. Despite bellicose talk from the LRA delegation, the fact remained that the LRA had retreated into the Garamba National Park due to mounting military pressure in Sudan. Giro said that despite its relative weakness, the LRA was in his judgment still well armed and large enough to pose a threat to South Sudan.

(3) LRA/LRM Delegation: Carmenati characterized the term LRM as a misnomer - there was no political wing of the LRA. The purported delegation was in fact a collection of political dissidents from the Ugandan diaspora who had only visited the LRA leadership twice, and briefly, and who were unable to commit Kony and his senior commanders to any negotiated conditions. The CSE facilitators assumed that they would need to travel to Kony's camp as the talks progressed to make sure that Kony accepted various proposed positions. Carmenati described the LRA delegation as amateurish and disorganized, learning by doing. The putative president, Martin Ogul, had been completely mute during the first two sessions, as had the five LRA officers who joined the delegations. The other delegates frequently contradicted each other or requested long time outs to argue among themselves about what position to take. Giro said that they appeared to have no coherent political agenda. He said that the first two pages of the eighteen-page LRA policy paper was a convoluted argument that the LRA in fact had a political master plan.

(4) Ugandan Delegation: Giro praised the comportment of GOU Internal Affairs Minister Rugunda, who spoke almost exclusively for the GOU delegation and who had shown himself to be firm but calm. Giro said that he was aware that many

of the Ugandans were not enthused with the entire negotiation process. He said that this was a sentiment shared by many in Kampala, including Minister Mbabazi, who was staunchly opposed to the talks. CSE nonetheless felt that the GOU would be unable to walk away from the negotiations without a good faith attempt to forge an agreement.

(5) Others: Giro said that he and Carmenati had just concluded a series of meetings with the Ugandan religious community, Acholi chiefs, commissioners and politicians from Eastern and Western Equatoria, and traditional leaders from other groups from those two states. He said that the tribal leaders had attributed 90 percent of the atrocities, which they described in detail, to the LRA. Giro observed that the South Sudanese were particularly furious with the LRA. The Sudanese tribal leaders were also critical of the UPDF for refusing to fight the LRA. Several tribal leaders said that they had informed the UPDF of the exact location of LRA bands, but the Ugandans had taken no action until the LRA had attacked villages, and then engaged only in half-hearted pursuit. Giro said that this lack of zeal for the fight was due to the large number of former LRA fighters who had been pressed into the ranks of the UPDF expeditionary force based in Sudan. Carmenati offered that the GoSS was also tired of the UPDF presence and wanted to end the conflict so that their erstwhile allies would return home.

Conclusions

15. (C) The CSE mediators admitted that they negotiations would be difficult. Giro said that it was similar to peace negotiations in Liberia, but in some ways worse. Despite the difficulties, the current perceived weakness of the LRA and the apparent willingness of Museveni to negotiate an end to the conflict created the circumstances under which an agreement became possible. CSE realized, however, that there was no guarantee for a successful negotiated peace.
STEINFELD